

November 13, 2012

#### Statement on HB 6004

Good afternoon, my name is Maiyoua Vang, and I am an assistant professor of educational administration and leadership at the University of Michigan-Dearborn. I speak today as a citizen of this state. As parents, citizens, and educators, we value the vital role that a vibrant public education system plays in the lives of our children. We recognize the inextricable link between an education system created in the interest of our children, families, and communities, and the guardianship of a robust democracy. Research has long recognized the importance of robust public engagement with all levels of schooling to create and maintain an education system that serves all children. For school districts that serve high needs student populations especially, the problem is not one of public governance; the problem is one of context, of entrenched poverty and structured disinvestment in schools and crumbling social infrastructures. Superimposing a state entity that effectuates the removal of citizens' right of participation, a right so necessary to advocating for critical contextual reform is highly problematic.

For those reasons, we express our deep concern with House Bill 6004, which retrofits the "Education Achievement Authority" and the "Education Achievement System" along with a host of entities such as "achievement schools" into Michigan's revised school code. Yet again, public tax dollars will be transferred into this private campaign while public engagement and oversight are transferred out. Without factual basis, private management of schools is now conflated with educational quality, and concomitantly, notions of school improvement are predicated on the disenfranchisement of citizens from local school governance. We are most alarmed by the logic of this brand of "reform" legislation, and indeed the class of legislation yet to come. And most importantly, we are not alone.

In last Tuesday's election, your constituents voted to repeal Public Act 4, a legislative instrument that eventually led to the creation of the state's first iteration of the "Educational Achievement Authority" or EAA. As citizens, we take seriously the stewardship of our schools and as such the right of participation in local school governance. And this right to participation is much coveted as evidenced by an overwhelming majority of Michigan counties, 90.3% in fact, that struck down PA 4, and thus effectively dissolving any body, entity, "achievement authority," or "achievement system" it so authorized. **Moreover, party affiliation failed to be a controlling factor in how we voted, with 90.1% of Republican-leaning counties (55 of 61 in fact) and 90.9% of Democratic-leaning counties (20 of 22 counties) voting to repeal PA 4.** From Michigan's most liberal congressional district, District 13, to its most conservative, District 2, voters value democratic governance in our institutions, including and especially in our schools. In fact, a within district analysis reveals that by a ratio of 8:3, the majority of counties in District 2, counties like **Benzie, Wexford, Oceana, Mason, and Newaygo**, again the most conservative congressional district in the entire state, voted to repeal PA 4.

Clearly, the support for sound democratic governance is bi-partisan. And we citizens value this public mechanism because it enfranchises us to protect our children and our schools and our neighborhoods from a "brand of reform" that has resulted in the miseducation of our children. We conclude by thanking you for this opportunity to register our concerns with HB 6004. As your constituents, we have full faith and confidence that you will not support anymore iterations of EAA or EAS, and will instead defend our democratic right to school governance across this state.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully submitted by Maiyoua Vang to the House Education Standing Committee  
this November 13, 2012.